WAR-TIME

VERSES

BY

OWEN SEAMAN

SECOND EDITION

SECOND IMPRESSION

From Owen Seaman

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WAR-TIME

Pro Patria

ENGLAND, in this great fight to which you go
  Because, where Honour calls you, go you must,
Be glad, whatever comes, at least to know
    You have your quarrel just.

Peace was your care ; before the nations' bar
  Her cause you pleaded and her ends you sought ;
But not for her sake, being what you are,
    Could you be bribed and bought.

Others may spurn the pledge of land to land,
  May with the brute sword stain a gallant past ;
But by the seal to which *you* set your hand,
    Thank God, you still stand fast !

Forth, then, to front that peril of the deep
  With smiling lips and in your eyes the light,
Steadfast and confident, of those who keep
    Their storied scutcheon bright.

And we, whose burden is to watch and wait—
High-hearted ever, strong in faith and prayer,
We ask what offering we may consecrate,
What humble service share.

To steel our souls against the lust of ease ;
To find our welfare in the common good ;
To hold together, merging all degrees
In one wide brotherhood ;—

To teach that he who saves himself is lost ;
To bear in silence though our hearts may bleed ;
To spend ourselves, and never count the cost,
For others' greater need ;—

To go our quiet ways, subdued and sane ;
To hush all vulgar clamour of the street ;
With level calm to face alike the strain
Of triumph or defeat ;—

This be our part, for so we serve you best,
So best confirm their prowess and their pride,
Your warrior sons, to whom in this high test
Our fortunes we confide.

August 12, 1914.

Dies Irae

To the German Kaiser

Amazing Monarch! who at various times,
Posing as Europe's self-appointed saviour,
Afforded copy for our ribald rhymes
By your behaviour;

We nursed no malice; nay, we thanked you much
Because your head-piece, swollen like a tumour,
Lent to a dullish world the needed touch
Of saving humour.

What with your wardrobes stuffed with warrior gear,
Your gander-step parades, your prancing Prussians,
Your menaces that shocked the deafened sphere
With rude concussions;

Your fist that turned the pinkest rivals pale
Alike with sceptre, chisel, pen or palette,
And could at any moment, gloved in mail,
Smite like a mallet;

DIES IRAE

Master of all the Arts, and, what was more,
  Lord of the limelight blaze that let us know it—
You seemed a gift designed on purpose for
    The flippant poet.

Time passed and put to these old jests an end ;
  Into our open hearts you found admission,
Ate of our bread and pledged us like a friend
    Above suspicion.

You shared our griefs with seeming-gentle eyes ;
  You moved among us cousinly entreated,
Still hiding, under that fair outward guise,
    A heart that cheated.

And now the mask is down, and forth you stand
  Known for a King whose word is no great matter,
A traitor proved, for every honest hand
    To strike and shatter.

This was the "Day" foretold by yours and you—
  In whispers here, and there with beery clamours—
You and your rat-hole spies and blustering crew
    Of loud Potsdamers.

And lo, there dawns another, swift and stern,
  When on the wheels of wrath, by Justice' token,
Breaker of God's own Peace, you shall in turn
    Yourself be broken.

August 19, 1914.

The Call of England

Come, all ye who love her well,
  Ye whose hopes are one with hers,
One with hers the hearts that swell
  When the pulse of memory stirs ;
She from whom your life ye take
  Claims you ; how can ye forget ?
Come, your honour stands at stake !
      Pay your debt !

By her sons that hold the deep,
  Nerves at strain and sinews tense,
Sleepless-eyed that ye may sleep
  Girdled in a fast defence ;
By her sons that face the fire
  Where the battle-lines are set—
Give your country her desire !
      Pay your debt !

He that, leaving child and wife
  In our keeping, unafraid,
Goes to dare the deadly strife,
  Shall he see his trust betrayed ?

Shall he come again and find
  Hollow cheeks and eyelids wet ?
Guard them as your kith and kind !
      Pay your debt !

Sirs, we should be shamed indeed
  If the bitter cry for bread,
Children's cries in cruel need,
  Rose and fell uncomforted !
Ah, but, since the patriot glow
  Burns in English bosoms yet,
Twice and thrice ye will, I know,
      Pay your debt !

August 26, 1914.

Probation

To a King's Recruit

Now is your time of trial, now
  When into dusk the glamour pales
  And the first glow of passion fails
That lit your eyes and flushed your brow
In that great moment when you made your vow.

The Vision fades ; you scarce recall
  The sudden swelling of the heart,
  The swift resolve to have your part
In this the noblest quest of all
By which our word is given to stand or fall.

Your mother's pride, your comrades' praise—
  All that romance that seemed so fair
  Grows dim, and you are left to bear
The prose of duty's sombre ways
And labour of the long unlovely days.

Yet here's the test to prove you kin
  With those to whom we trust our fate,
  Sober and steadfast, clean and straight,
In that stern school of discipline
Hardened to war against the foe within.

For only so, in England's sight,
  By that ordeal's searching flame
  Found worthy of your fathers' fame,
With all your spirit's armour bright
Can you go forth in her dear cause to fight.

September 23, 1914.

An Imperial Overture

[From notes taken by a British airman while engaged in hovering over the Kaiser's headquarters at ——. The name of the place is excised because the Press Bureau Authorities do not wish the Kaiser to be informed of his own whereabouts.]

Now let an awful silence hold the field,
And everybody else's mouth be sealed ;
For lo ! your Kaiser (sound the warning gong !)
Prepares to loose his clarion lips in song.

In time of War the poet gets his chance,
When even wingless Pegasi will prance ;
Yet We, whose pinions oft outsoared the crow's,
Have hitherto confined Ourself to prose.
But who shall doubt that We could sing as well as
That warrior-bard, Tyrtæus, late of Hellas,
Who woke the Spartans up with words and chorus
Twenty-six centuries B.U. (Before Us) ?
Also, since Truth is near allied to Beauty,
We are convinced that We shall prove more fluty
Than certain British scribes whom We have read
(Recently published by The Bodley Head).

Well, then, it is Our purpose to inflame
Our soldiers' arteries with lust of fame ;
To give them something in the lyric line
That shall be tantamount to fumes of wine,
Yet not too heady, like the champagne (sweet)
That lately left them dormant in the street,
So that the British, coming up just then,
Took them for swine and not for gentlemen.

Rather we look to brace them, soul and limb
With something in the nature of a hymn,
Which they may chant, assisted by the band,
While working backwards to the Fatherland.
Put to the air of *Deutschland über alles*
Or else to one of Our own sacred ballets,
The lilt of it should leave their hearts so fiery
That at the finish they would make enquiry—
" What would our Attila to-day have done ? "
And, crying " Havoc ! " go and play the Hun.
For there are some cathedrals standing yet,
And heavy is the task to Culture set,
Ere We may lay aside the holy rod
Made to chastise the foes of Us and God.

And now that We are fairly in the vein
Let Us proceed to build the lofty strain.
Ho ! bid the Muse to enter and salute
The burnished toe of Our Imperial boot !

AN IMPERIAL OVERTURE

Hush ! guns ! and, ye howitzers, cease your fire !
We, William, are about to sound the lyre !

Note.—Unfortunately the actual composition of which this is the preface has been censored, as likely to have a disintegrating effect upon the discipline of our forces at the front.

September 30, 1914.

Another "Scrap of Paper"

WILHELM, I do not know your whereabouts.
The gods elude us. When we would detect your
Earthly address, 'tis veiled in misty doubts
Of devious conjecture.

At Nancy, in a moist trench, I am told
That you performed an unrehearsed lustration;
That there you linger, having caught a cold,
Followed by inflammation.

Others assert that your asbestos hut,
Conveyed (with you inside) to Polish regions,
Promises to afford a likely butt
To Russia's wingéd legions.

But, whether this or that (or both) be true,
Or merely tales of which we have the air full,
In any case I say, "O Wilhelm, do,
Do, if you can, be careful!"

For if, by evil chance, upon your head,
Your precious head, some impious shell alighted
I should regard my dearest hopes as dead,
My occupation blighted.

ANOTHER "SCRAP OF PAPER"

I want to save you for another scene,
  Having perused a certain Manifesto
That stimulates an itching, very keen,
        In every Briton's best toe—

An Order issued to your Army's flower,
  Giving instructions most precise and stringent
For the immediate wiping out of our
        " Contemptible " contingent.

Well, that's a reason why I'd see you spared ;
  So take no risks, but rather heed my warning
Because I have a little plan prepared
        For Potsdam, one fine morning.

I see you, ringed about with conquering foes—
  See you, in penitential robe (with taper),
Invited to assume a bending pose
        And eat that scrap of paper !

October 7, 1914.

Thomas of the Light Heart

FACING the guns, he jokes as well
  As any Judge upon the Bench ;
Between the crash of shell and shell
  His laughter rings along the trench ;
He seems immensely tickled by a
Projectile which he calls a " Black Maria."

He whistles down the day-long road,
  And, when the chilly shadows fall
And heavier hangs the weary load,
  Is he down-hearted ? Not at all.
'Tis then he takes a light and airy
View of the tedious route to Tipperary.

His songs are not exactly hymns ;
  He never learned them in the choir ;
And yet they brace his dragging limbs
  Although they miss the sacred fire ;
Although his choice and cherished gems
Do not include " The Watch upon the Thames."

He takes to fighting as a game ;
  He does no talking, through his hat,
Of holy missions ; all the same
  He has his faith—be sure of that ;
He'll not disgrace his sporting breed,
Nor play what isn't cricket. There's his creed.

October 14, 1914.

To the Enemy, on his Achievement

Now wanes the third moon since your conquering host
Was to have laid our weakling army low,
And walked through France at will. For that loud boast
What have you got to show ?

A bomb that chipped a tower of Notre Dame,
Leaving its mark like trippers' knives that scar
The haunts of beauty—that's the best *réclame*
You have achieved so far.

Paris, that through her humbled Triumph-Arch
Was doomed to see you tread your fathers' tracks—
Paris, your goal, now lies a six days' march
Behind your homing backs.

Pressed to the borders where you lately passed
Bulging with insolence and fat with pride,
You stake your all upon a desperate cast
To stem the gathering tide.

TO THE ENEMY, ON HIS ACHIEVEMENT

Eastward the Russian draws you to his fold,
  Content, on his own ground, to bide his day,
Out of whose toils not many feet of old
        Found the returning way.

And still along the seas our watchers keep
  Their grip upon your throat with bands of steel,
While that Armada, which should rake the deep,
        Skulks in its hole at Kiel.

So stands your record—stay, I cry you grace—
  I wronged you. There is Belgium, where your sword
Has bled to death a free and gallant race
        Whose life you held in ward ;

Where on your trail the smoking land lies bare
  Of hearth and homestead, and the dead babe clings
About its murdered mother's breast—ah, there,
        Yes, you have done great things !

October 21, 1914.

Canute and the Kaiser

[Thoughts extracted from a sea-shell, howitzer pattern, on the Belgian coast.]

THERE was a King by name Canute
(In ancient jargon known as Knut),
And I, for one, will not dispute
The kingly figure which he cut;
A god in mufti—so his courtiers said—
Whatever thing he chose to have a try at,
He did it (loosely speaking) on his head,
By just remarking, "*Fiat!*"

One day they sat him by the sea
To put his virtue to the test,
And there, without conviction, he
Threw off the following, by request:—
"Ocean," he said, "I see your waves are wet"
(Bravely he spoke, but in his heart he funked 'em),
"So to your further progress here I set
A period, or *punctum*."

He knew it wasn't any good
  Talking like that ; and when the foam
Made for his feet (he knew it would)
  He turned at once and made for home ;
And " I'm no god, but just a man," he cried,
  " And you, my sycophants, are sorry rotters,
Who told your Knut that he could dare the tide
    To damp his heavenly trotters."

* * * * *

The scene was changed. Another strand ;
  Another god (alleged) was there
(In spirit, you must understand ;
  His actual frame occurred elsewhere) ;—
" O element designed for German ships,
  Whose future lies," said he, " upon the water,
I strike at England ! Ho ! " and licked his lips
    For lust of loot and slaughter.

Then by the sea was answer made,
  And down the wind this word was blown :
" Thus far ! but here your steps are stayed ;
  England is mine ; I guard my own ! "
And, as upon his ear this challenge fell,
  Out of the deep there also fell upon it, or
Close in the neighbourhood, a singing shell
    From H.M. *Mersey*, Monitor.

CANUTE AND THE KAISER

And just as old Canute (or Knut)
  Stopped not to parley when he found
His line of exit nearly cut,
  But moved his feet to drier ground,
So too that other Monarch, much concerned
  About his safety, looked no longer foam-ward,
But said, "This sea's too much for me," and turned
    Strategically home-ward.

October 28, 1914.

To a False Patriot

He came obedient to the Call ;
  He might have shirked like half his mates
Who, while their comrades fight and fall,
  Still go to swell the football gates.

And you, a patriot in your prime,
  You waved a flag above his head,
And hoped he'd have a high old time,
  And slapped him on the back and said :—

" You'll show 'em what we British are !
  Give us your hand, old pal, to shake ; "
And took him round from bar to bar
  And made him drunk—for England's sake.

That's how you helped him. Yesterday,
  Clear-eyed and earnest, keen and hard,
He held himself the soldier's way—
  And now they've got him under guard.

That doesn't hurt you ; you're all right ;
  Your easy conscience takes no blame ;
But he, poor boy, with morning's light,
  He eats his heart out, sick with shame.

TO A FALSE PATRIOT

What's that to you ? You understand
  Nothing of all his bitter pain ;
You have no regiment to brand ;
  You have no uniform to stain ;

No vow of service to abuse,
  No pledge to King and country due ;
But he had something dear to lose,
  And he has lost it—thanks to you.

November 4, 1914.

To the Shirker: A Last Appeal

Now of your free choice, while the chance is yours
  To share their glory who have gladly died
Shielding the honour of our island shores
  And that fair heritage of starry pride,—
Now, ere another evening's shadow falls,
    Come, for the trumpet calls.

What if to-morrow through the land there runs
  This message for an everlasting stain ?—
" England expected each of all her sons
  To do his duty—but she looked in vain ;
Now she demands, by order sharp and swift,
    What should have been a gift."

For so it must be, if her manhood fail
  To stand by England in her deadly need ;
If still her wounds are but an idle tale
  The word must issue which shall make you heed ;
And they who left her passionate pleas unheard
    Will *have* to hear that word.

And, losing your free choice, you also lose
  Your right to rank, on Memory's shining scrolls,
With those, your comrades, who made haste to choose
  The willing service asked of loyal souls;
From all who gave such tribute of the heart
    Your name will stand apart.

I think you cannot know what meed of shame
  Shall be their certain portion who pursue
Pleasure "as usual" while their country's claim
  Is answered only by the gallant few.
Come, then, betimes, and on her altar lay
    Your sacrifice to-day!

November 11, 1914.

To the Bitter End

A word with the War-Lord

A RUMOUR comes from Rome (where rumours
breed)
That you are sick of taking blow on blow,
And would inter with all convenient speed
The hatchet wielded by your largest foe.

Is it the shadow Christmas casts before
That makes the iron of your soul unbend,
And melt in prayer for this unholy war
(Meaning the part that pinches most) to end ?

Is it your fear to mark at that high feast
The writing on the wall that seals your fate,
And, where the Christ-star watches in the East,
To hear the guns that thunder at your gate ?

For on your heart no Christmas Peace can fall.
The chimes shall be a tocsin, and the red
Glow of the Yule-wood embers shall recall
A myriad smouldering pyres of murdered dead.

And anguish, wailing to the wintry skies,
  Shall with its dirges drown the sacred hymn,
And round your royal hearth the curse shall rise
  Of lowly hearths laid waste to suit your whim.

And you shall think on altars left forlorn,
  On temple-aisles made desolate at your nod,
Where never a white-robed choir this holy morn
  Shall chant their greeting to the Birth of God.

Peace ? There is none for you, nor can be none ;
  For still shall Memory, like a fetid breath,
Poison your life-days while the slow hours run,
  Till it be stifled in the dust of death.

November 18, 1914.

In Memory of Field-Marshal Earl Roberts

[Born 1832. Died, on Service at the Front, November 14th, 1914.]

He died, as soldiers die, amid the strife,
  Mindful of England in his latest prayer ;
God, of His love, would have so fair a life
    Crowned with a death as fair.

He might not lead the battle as of old,
  But, as of old, among his own he went,
Breathing a faith that never once grew cold,
    A courage still unspent.

So was his end ; and, in that hour, across
  The face of War a wind of silence blew,
And bitterest foes paid tribute to the loss
    Of a great heart and true.

But we who loved him, what have we to lay
  For sign of worship on his warrior-bier ?
What homage, could his lips but speak to-day,
    Would he have held most dear ?

IN MEMORY OF F.-M. EARL ROBERTS

Not grief, as for a life untimely reft;
  Not vain regret for counsel given in vain;
Not pride of that high record he has left,
    Peerless and pure of stain;

But service of our lives to keep her free,
  The land he served; a pledge above his grave
To give her even such a gift as he,
    The soul of loyalty, gave.

That oath we plight, as now the trumpets swell
  His requiem, and the men-at-arms stand mute
And through the mist the guns he loved so well
    Thunder a last salute!

November 25, 1914.

Truthful Willie

[Suggested by an American's interview with the Crown Prince and also by Wordsworth's "We are Seven."]

A SIMPLE earnest-minded youth,
  Who wore in both his eyes
A calm pellucid lake of Truth—
  What should he know of lies ?

I met a gentle German Prince,
  His name was Truthful Will,
An honest type—and, ever since,
  His candour haunts me still.

" About this War—come tell me, Sir,
  If you would be so kind,
Just any notions which occur
  To your exalted mind."

" Frankly, I cannot bear," said he,
  " The very thought of strife ;
It seems so sad ; it seems to me
  A wicked waste of life.

" Thank Father's God that I can say
  My constant aim was Peace ;
I simply lived to see the Day
  (*Den Tag*) when wars would cease.

" But, just as I was well in train
  To realise my dream,
Came England, all for lust of gain,
  And spoilt my beauteous scheme.

" But tell me how the rumours run ;
  Be frank and tell the worst
Touching myself ; you speak to one
  With whom the Truth comes first."

" Prince," I replied, " the vulgar view
  Pictured you on your toes
Eager for gore ; they say that you
  Were ever bellicose.

" 'Twas you, the critics say, who led
  The loud War Party's cry
For blood and iron." " Oh ! " he said,
  " Oh, what a dreadful lie !

" ' War Party ' ? Well, I'm Father's pet
  And, if such things had been,
He must have let me know, and yet
  I can't think what you mean."

" But your Bernhardi," I replied,
  " He preached the Great War Game."
" ' Bernhardi ' ! who was he ? " he cried ;
  " I never heard his name !

" Dear Father must be told of him ;
  Father, who loathes all war,
Is looking rather grey and grim,
  But that should make him roar ! "

So, with a smile that knew no art,
  He left me well content
Thus to have communed, heart to heart,
  With one so innocent.

And still I marvelled, having scanned
  Those eyes so full of Truth,
" Oh *why* do men misunderstand
  This bright and blameless youth ? "

December 9, 1914.

The Old Sea-Rover Speaks

[Referring to our victory off the Falkland Islands, the *Tägliche Rundschau* remarks: "On board our North Sea ships our sailors will clench their teeth and all hearts will burn with the feeling, 'England the enemy! Up and at the enemy!'" The gallant bombardment of defenceless towns on our East Coast would appear to be the immediate outcome of this intelligent attitude.]

BEHIND your lock-gates stowed away,
  Out of the great tides' ebb and flow,
How could you guess, this many a day,
  Who was your leading naval foe?
But now you learn, a little late—
  So loud the rumours from the sea grow—
England's the thing you have to hate,
  And not (for instance) Montenegro.

The facts are just as you've been told;
  Further disguise would be but vain;
We have a *penchant* from of old
  For being masters on the main;
It is a custom which we caught
  From certain sea-kings who begat us,
And that is why we like the thought
  That you propose to up and at us.

THE OLD SEA-ROVER SPEAKS

Come where you will—the seas are wide ;
  And choose your Day—they're all alike ;
You'll find us ready where we ride
  In calm or storm and wait to strike ;
But—if of shame your shameless Huns
  Can yet retrieve some casual traces—
Please fight our men and ships and guns
  Not women-folk and watering-places.

December 23, 1914.

The War-Lord's New Year's Eve

KAISER, what vigil will you keep to-night ?
  Before the altar will you lay again
Your " shining armour," and renew your plight
  To wear it ever clean of stain ?

Or, while your priesthood chants the Hymn of Hate,
  Like incense will you lift to God your breath
In praise that you are privileged by fate
  To do His little ones to death ?

Will you make " resolutions " ?—saying, " Lo !
  I will be humble. Though my own bright sword
Has shattered Belgium, yet will I bestow
  The credit on a higher Lord.

" What am I but His minister of doom ?
  The smoke of burning temples shall ascend,
With none to intercept the savoury fume,
  Straight upward to my honoured Friend."

Or does your heart admit, in hours like these,
God is not mocked with words ; His judgment
stands ;
Nor all the waters of His cleansing seas
Can wash the blood-guilt from your hands ?

Make your account with Him as best you can.
What other hope has this New Year to give ?
For outraged earth has laid on you a ban
Not to be lifted while you live.

December 30, 1914.

The Murderers

Lines addressed to their Master

If I were asked what gives me most amaze
  Among your signs of mental aberration,
I should select, from several curious traits,
  Your lack of commonplace imagination.

You seem to think, if once you win the day,
  You justify your means ; it won't much matter
What laws of man you broke to get your way
  What rules of chivalry you chose to shatter.

Is that your reading in the glass of Time ?
  And has your swollen head become so rotten
That you suppose success could cancel crime,
  Or murder in its triumph be forgotten ?

Man shall not live, O King, by bread alone,
  Though spiced with blood of innocent lives for leaven ;
He must have breath of honour round him blown
  As vital as the very air of heaven.

What should it serve you, though your end were
won
And earth were made a mat to wipe your boot
on,
If every decent race beneath the sun
Spits for contempt upon the name of Teuton ?

January 27, 1915.

Moses II

To the New Lord of Islam

He led the Chosen People forth ;
  Over the Red Sea tramped their legions ;
They wandered East, they wandered North
  Through very vague and tedious regions,
Ploughing a lot of desolating sand
Before they struck the Promised Land.

And you, who play so many parts,
  And figure in such fancy poses,
Now, poring over Syrian charts,
  Dressed for the character of Moses,
In spirit lead your Turks, a happy band,
Bound for another Promised Land.

Promises you have made before ;
  And doubtless your adopted Bosches
Deemed the Canal would lend its floor
  To pass them through without goloshes,
As though it were a segment of the dry
Peninsula of Sinaï.

MOSES II

And when they feared to lose their way
  You answered them with ready wit : " Oh !
You'll have a pillar of cloud by day,
  And through the night a fiery ditto,
But never said that these would be supplied
By airmen on the other side.

Nor did you mention how the sun
  Promotes a thirst in desert places,
Nor how their route was like to run
  A little short of green oases,
Because the wells that glad the wanderer's sight
Have been removed by dynamite.

Come down, O fool, from Pisgah's heights,
  Where, stung by Furies misbegotten,
You counterfeit Mosaic flights,
  Aching for Egypt's corn and cotton ;
Think how it makes the local fellah smile
To hear your " Watch upon the Nile ! "

February 3, 1915.

The Mark of the Beast

[In a Munich paper Herr Ganghofer recites the following remark of the Kaiser's, whose special journalistic confidant he is said to be: "To possess Kultur means to have the deepest conscientiousness and the highest morality. My Germans possess that."]

'Tis enough that we know you have said it;
  We feel that the facts correspond
With your speech as a Person of credit,
  Whose word is as good as his bond;
Who are we that our critics should quarrel
  With the flattering doctrine you preach—
That the German, in all that is moral,
    Is an absolute peach?

But the puzzle grows odder and odder:
  If your people are spotless of blame,
Being perfectly sound cannon-fodder,
  Then whose is the fault and the shame?
If it's just from a deep sense of duty
  That they prey upon woman and priest,
And their minds are a model of Beauty,
    Then who is the Beast?

For a Beast is at work in this matter ;
  We have seen—and the traces endure—
The red blood of the innocent spatter
  The print of his horrible spoor ;
On their snouts, like the lovers of Circe—
  Your men that are changed into swine—
The Mark of the Beast-without-mercy
    Is set for a sign.

You have posed (next to God) as the pillar
  That steadies the fabric of State,
Whence issues the brave baby-killer
  Supplied with his hymnal of hate ;
Once known for a chivalrous knight, he
  Now hogs with the Gadarene herd ;
Since it can't be the other Almighty,
    How *has* it occurred ?

When at last they begin to be weary
  Of sluicing their virtues in slime,
And they put the embarrassing query :—
  " Who turned us to brutes of the prime ?
Full of culture and most conscientious,
  Who made us a bestial crew ?
Who pounded the poisons that drench us ? "—
    I wouldn't be you.

February 10, 1915.

The Gods of Germany

[A certain German hierarch declares that it goes well with his country. He finds it unthinkable that the enemy should be permitted to "trample under foot the fresh, joyous, religious life of Germany."]

LIFT up your jocund hearts, belovéd friends!
From East and West the heretic comes swooping,
But all in vain his impious strength he spends
If you refuse to let him catch you stooping;
All goes serenely up to date;
Lift up your hearts in hope (and hate)!

Deutschland—that beacon in the general night—
Which faith and worship keep their fixed abode in,
Shall teach the infidel that Might is Right,
Spreading the gospel dear to Thor and Odin;
O let us, in this wicked war,
Stick tight to Odin and to Thor!

Over our race these gods renew their reign ;
  For them your piety sets the joy-bells pealing ;
Louvain and Rheims and many a shattered fane
  Attest the force of your religious feeling ;
    Not Thor's own hammer could have made
    A better job of this crusade.

In such a cause all ye that lose your breath
  Shall have a place reserved in high Valhalla ;
And ye shall get, who die a Moslem's death,
  The fresh young houri promised you by Allah ;
    Between the two—that chance and this—
    Your Heaven should be hard to miss.

February 17, 1915.

The Sorrows of the Sultan

Borne on the breezes of the West-Sou'-West,
What are these sounds one hears
That break upon my post-meridian rest,
And, falling on the ears
Of my devoted ladies of the harem,
Scare 'em ?

I tell my people 'tis the conquering Huns
That let off fires of joy ;
But I know better ; they are British guns,
Intended to destroy
The peace I suck from my narcotic hubble-bubble.

How can I cope with these accurséd giaours
If once my forts give out ?
I miss the usual Concert of the Powers ;
I have no ships about ;
Save where in dock the *Goeben*, full of bruises,
Snoozes.

THE SORROWS OF THE SULTAN

O how I loathe that vessel! How her name
Stinks in my quivering nose,
Since that infernal juncture when she came
Flying before her foes,
And in my haven dropped her beastly anchor
(Blank her!).

Abdul! I would that I had shared your plight,
Or Europe seen my heels,
Before the hour when Allah bound me tight
To William's chariot-wheels!
Before, in fact, our two ways, mine and his, met.
Kismet!

March 3, 1915.

The Altruists

[A semi-official message from Berlin to the *Cologne Gazette* contends that "the independent national life of the neutrals in the Balkans" is threatened by English and Russian ambitions. Germany and Austria, on the other hand, are fighting for "the independence of the small nations . . . for the conceptions of nationality and culture."]

Not for ourselves! Thank Heaven, our hands
  are pure.
  We Germans ask no solid compensations,
Content if on our tombs these words endure:
  "Here lie the champions of the little
    nations."

Babies we kill (and get misunderstood)
  Not for our own joy, but for that of others,
Doing our best for Europe's common good,
  But chiefly for our little Balkan brothers.

Money we spend—as much as we can spare;
  Threats and appeals alternately we try on,
To save them from the wicked, wicked Bear,
  To snatch them from the horrid, horrid Lion.

THE ALTRUISTS

We say what loot they'll touch as our allies,
  What larger spaces in the realm of Sol earn ;
We mention bonds of blood and marriage-ties
  That hitch them to the House of Hohenzollern.

We talk of nationality at stake,
  Urging that in that holy cause we need 'em,
That, joined with us, they shall in turn partake
  The germ of culture and the fruits of freedom.

And, should they call our spoken word in doubt,
  And question if the evidence is ample,
For proof we trot our testimonials out,
  And point to Belgium, saying "There's a sample!"

March 17, 1915.

To Certain German Professors of Chemics

When you observed how brightly other tutors
  Inspired the yearning heart of Youth ;
How from their lips, like Pilsen's foaming pewters,
  It sucked the fount of German Truth ;
There, in your Kaiserlich laboratory,
  " We too," you said, " will find a task to do,
And so contribute something to the glory
    Of God and William Two.

" Bring forth the stink-pots. Such a foul aroma
  By arts divine shall be evoked
As will to leeward cause a state of coma
  And leave the enemy blind and choked ;
By gifts of culture we will work such ravages
  With our superbly patriotic smells
As would confound with shame those half-baked savages,
    The poisoners of wells."

TO CERTAIN GERMAN PROFESSORS

Good! You have more than matched the rival pastors
That tute a credulous Fatherland;
And we admit that you are proved our masters
When there is dirty work in hand;
But in your lore I notice one hiatus:
Your Kaiser's scutcheon with its hideous blot—
You've no corrosive in your apparatus
Can out that damnéd spot!

May 5, 1915.

To Belgium in Exile

[Lines dedicated to one of her priests, by whose words they were prompted.]

LAND of the desolate, Mother of tears,
  Weeping your beauty marred and torn,
Your children tossed upon the spears,
  Your altars rent, your hearths forlorn,
Where Spring has no renewing spell,
And Love no language save a long Farewell !

Ah, precious tears, and each a pearl,
  Whose price—for so in God we trust
Who saw them fall in that blind swirl
  Of ravening flame and reeking dust—
The spoiler with his life shall pay,
When Justice at the last demands her Day.

O tried and proved, whose record stands
  Lettered in blood too deep to fade,
Take courage ! Never in our hands
  Shall the avenging sword be stayed ·
Till you are healed of all your pain,
And come with Honour to your own again.

May 19, 1915.

Liberty: The False and the True

We rocked ourselves in balmy sleep,
  Knowing Britannia ruled the waves,
And while her watch-dogs held the deep
  Never, oh no, should we be slaves ;
Others in less enlightened lands
  Had lords to drill and drive and bleed 'em,
But we, thank God, could fold our hands
  All in the blessed name of Freedom.

By that most comfortable word
  We claimed, as only Britons may,
The right to work, if we preferred,
  The right, if so we chose, to play ;
Under that flag we danced and dined,
  Lifted the lusty patriot chorus,
And paid a few (that way inclined)
  To go and do our fighting for us.

So, when the sudden war-bolt fell,
  We still kept up our games and strikes,
True to the law we loved so well—
  Let everyone do what he likes ;

This was a free land ; none should tramp
  In conscript lines, dragooned and herded,
Though some might take a call to camp
  If the request was nicely worded.

And now we learn—at what a price,
  And in an hour how dark and late—
That never save by sacrifice
  Men come to Liberty's estate ;
No birthright helps us here at need ;
  Each must be taught by stern probation
That they alone are free indeed
  Who bind themselves to serve the nation.

June 2, 1915.

To a Minstrel, going to the Wars

"Grinder who serenely grindest
At my door the Hundredth Psalm."
C. S. Calverley.

Kin to him that stormed the portal
Where the poet passed his prime—
Him, the grinder, made immortal
By a spell of radiant rhyme;

Type peculiarly Italian,
Whose exotic airs (and ape)
Live, as on a bronze medallion
In a literary shape;

Would that I could raise a carol
Blithe as C. S. C.'s to-day,
As you go with well-slung barrel
Light of heart to join the fray!

For with many a loud *Evviva*
You are called to pitch your tent
Where the ridges look on Riva
And the vale runs north to Trent.

TO A MINSTREL, GOING TO THE WARS.

There they need the heartening succour
  Of your instrument's appeals
To infuse a finer pluck or
  Aid digestion after meals.

You shall play them into action
  Like the pipes whose eerie wail
Seems to give such satisfaction
  To the sentimental Gael.

Fresh as paint, your Bersaglieri
  Shall negotiate the heights
As you grind out "Tipperary"
  Up among the Dolomites.

Mobile as the climbing squirrel
  You shall make the mountains hum,
Till your music, heard in Tirol,
  Strikes the native yodlers dumb.

Go! and, mindful of Magenta,
  Churn and churn the martial strain
Till Italia Irredenta
  By your art is born again.

Then (for I am getting wordy),
  When you've floored your ancient foe,
We will crown your hurdy-gurdy
  With the homage of Soho!

June 9, 1915.

For the Red Cross

Ye that have gentle hearts and fain
  To succour men in need,
There is no voice could ask in vain
  With such a cause to plead—
The cause of those that in your care,
  Who know the debt to honour due,
Confide the wounds they proudly wear,
  The wounds they took for you.

And yonder where the battle's waves
  Broke yesterday o'erhead,
Where now the swift and shallow graves
  Cover our English dead,
Think how your sisters play their part,
  Who serve as in a holy shrine,
Tender of hand and brave of heart,
  Under the Red Cross Sign.

Ah, by that symbol, worshipped still,
  Of life-blood sacrificed,
That lonely Cross on Calvary's hill
  Red with the wounds of Christ ;

FOR THE RED CROSS

By that free gift to none denied,
  Let Pity pierce you like a sword,
And love go out to open wide
  The gate of life restored.

September 9, 1914.

Between Midnight and Morning

Lines written for "King Albert's Book"

You that have faith to look with fearless eyes
  Beyond the tragedy of a world at strife,
And trust that out of night and death shall rise
    The dawn of ampler life ;

Rejoice, whatever anguish rend your heart,
  That God has given you, for a priceless dower
To live in these great times and have your part
    In Freedom's crowning hour.

That you may tell your sons who see the light
  High in the heaven, their heritage to take :—
"I saw the powers of darkness put to flight !
    I saw the morning break ! "

December 16, 1914.

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